

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 071333Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8431
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LAPAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMCONQUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 3819

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: THE LIBERAL'S VIVANCO: THE OPPOSITION DROPS THE SHOE

REF: QUITO A-26

1. LIBERAL VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ARSENIO VIVANCO'S EARLIER FINE FOR THE FALSIFICATION OF IMPORT DOCUMENTS (1965) BECAME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE JUNE 3 WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL NAMED REYNALDO PUERTAS PUBLISHED AN EXTRACT OF THE COURT RECORD IN QUITO'S TIEMPO. VIVANCO RESPONDED THE FOLLOWING DAY IN A PAID AD CLAIMING THAT THE INCIDENT DERIVED FROM AN ERROR THAT HAD BEEN MADE BY THE WHOLESALER FROM WHOM HE HAD PURCHASED. HE CLAIMED THAT THE WHOLESALER HAD ADMITTED HIS FAULT AND HAD REIMBURSED VIVANCO'S COMPANY FOR THE CONFISCATED MERCHANDISE. THE ACTUAL CHARGE, SAID VIVANCO, WAS ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR (FALTA REGLAMENTARIA). HE FURTHER DIMINISHED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE INCIDENT BY NOTING THAT THE MERCHANDISE IN QUESTION WAS VALUED AT ABOUT
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\$490 US AND THE FINE WAS ONLY 1000 SUCRES (APPROXIMATELY \$40 US).

2. WE HAVE RECEIVE REPORTS FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THE CFP HAD KNOWLEDGE OF THE VIVANCO SANCTION AND THAT THEY INTENDED TO DROP THE BOMB SHORTLY BEFORE THE ELECTION TO MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT. THE

PUBLICATION OF THE COURT DOCUMENT, PERHAPS THE MOST INNOCUOUS WAY TO TREAT THE QUESTION, FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY (ON A SUNDAY) BY A WELL-PREPARED ANSWER, FOR A TIME RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF A PREEMPTIVE TACTICAL MOVE BY THE LIBERALS. HOWEVER, A STRONGER ACCUSATION PUBLISHED BY THE SAME INDIVIDUAL JUNE 6 INDICATES A REAL MOVE BY THE LIBERALS' OPPOSITION.

3. THUS FAR, THE PAID ADS IN THE LOW CIRCULATION EL TIEMPO AND FLYERS DISTRIBUTED IN GUAYAQUIL HAVE BEEN THE ONLY ATTEMPTS TO EXPLOIT THE SKELETON IN VIVANCO'S CLOSET. EVEN AFTER THIS RECENT EXCHANGE IN EL EITEMP, THE REST OF THE MEDIA HAS NOT CHOSEN TO PICK UP THE MATTER. THIS IS IN DISTINCT CONTRAST WITH THE PANCHO HUERTA-FEDESARROLLO AFFAIR AND MAY SUGGEST SOME SORT OF COLLUSION BETWEEN RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA AND THE MEDIA. IF THE MATTER IS LEFT AS IT IS, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST VIVANCO WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DAMAGE HUERTA RENDON'S ELECTORAL CHANCES. VIVANCO IS SIMPLY A NON-CONTROVERSIAL PERSONALITY AND OLD PARTY WAR HORSE WHOSE NOMINATION ADDED LITTLE TO HUERTA'S STRENGTH; IT IS UNLIKELY THAT SUCH ACCUSATIONS AGAINST VIVANCO WILL SERIOUSLY DIMINISH HUERTA'S SUPPORT. IN ANY CASE, OUR FIRST INDICATIONS FROM THE LIBERALS IS THAT THEY INTEND TO TOUGH THE QUESTION OUT AND RETAIN VIVANCO. IT IS TOO CLOSE TO THE JULY ELECTION TO FIND A WAY OF
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REPLACING VIVANCO ON THE TICKET, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE LATE START RAUL CLEMENTE HAS HAD FOLLOWING THE DISQUALIFICATION OF THE PARTY'S FIRST CANDIDATE, PANCHO HUERTA.
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